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TAIWAN: CONCERN AT DEATH OF JUVENILE DETAINEE

The Republic of China (Taiwan) Government should immediately carry out a full and public inquiry into last week's disturbances at Hsinchu Juvenile Prison, Amnesty International said today in a letter to Minister of Justice Liao Cheng-hao.

Prison disturbances on 20 and 21 November led to the death of a 16-year-old inmate and to injuries to four others, including a detention centre warden.

"It is appalling that this has been allowed to happen -- we fear that excessive force may have been used by the security forces sent into the detention centre to stop the disturbance," Amnesty International said. "The actions of the security forces should be investigated urgently and the findings be made public to ensure that this does not happen again."

Amnesty International received reports that a post-mortem carried out on the deceased young inmate, Lu Meng-hsien, concluded that Lu did not die as a result of beatings, and that the probable cause of death was heart failure. The organization remains concerned about the circumstances of Lu's death, given his age, his apparent absence of medical history, and recent criticism expressed by the Control Yuan, an independent body investigating complaints against government officials, about the quality and reliability of forensic medical services in Taiwan.

Amnesty International believes that juveniles should always be treated in accordance with international human rights standards. In particular, governments should ensure that the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, are fully respected, whether or not they are signatories to the Convention.

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